



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

Agents in Connecticut seize armored luxury sedan linked to former Iraqi regime

NEW HAVEN, CT – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) today announced the seizure in Connecticut of an armored luxury sedan that belonged to the former Iraqi regime and was illegally imported from Iraq as a possible “war trophy.”

The white 1988 Mercedes Benz 560 SEL, which is equipped with armor plates, bulletproof windows, listening devices and various microphones, was seized yesterday at a residence in Ridgefield, Ct, by investigators from ICE, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) and the Ridgefield Police Department.

Federal agents seized the vehicle through civil forfeiture and pursuant to a number of possible violations, including; Title 18, USC 545 (Smuggling); Title 18, USC 542 (Entry of Goods by False Statements); and Executive Order 13315 (Blocking Property of the Former Iraqi Regime).

The alleged importer of the armored vehicle, a First Sergeant with the U.S. Army Reserves who served in the Iraqi conflict, has publicly stated that he purchased the vehicle from an Iraqi citizen for roughly \$5,000 in April 2003 in an upscale neighborhood of Baghdad. The Army Reservist has also publicly stated that he believed that the vehicle belonged to former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

ICE and SIGIR agents continue to investigate the circumstances surrounding the importation of the vehicle. There have been no arrests made in the case at this point.

The seizure was the result of an investigation by ICE and SIGIR under the umbrella of the Special Investigative Task Force for Iraq Reconstruction or “SPITFIRE.” SPITFIRE is comprised of agents from SIGIR, ICE, IRS Criminal Investigations, and the U.S. Department of State Office of the Inspector General.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.